

## HAT TRICK



Reaching overhead, such as into a closet for a hat, may be a fall risk for many frail elders. Again, foot positioning makes a difference. So does which way they pull the item off the shelf. This challenge helps participants with overhead reaches.

### ***Benefits »***

- ⦿ Provides progression for horizontal reaching (It's a Reach).
- ⦿ Enhances balance and posture awareness.
- ⦿ Experiments with techniques and posture.

### ***Set It Up »***

You'll need a hat box or reasonable facsimile, something lightweight and easy to grab; a high shelf (real or imagined; imagined ones are safer); and balance support for your participants.

### ***How to Do It »***

Warm up and stretch the shoulders with shoulder rolls, reaching stretches, and neck stretches.

#### ***Tug an Overhead Arm Backward***

Use the following cues.

- ⦿ Stand Lucy Goosey style
  - Unbraced abs
  - Straight, locked knees
- ⦿ Keeping one hand (or one leg) touching a balance support.
  - Reach one arm up and overhead.
  - Tug the arm backward. (The tug should be strong enough to cause their weight to shift backward a bit, but not strong enough to cause an imbalance.)
  - Did you feel that? Did it tug your whole body backward? (It should)
  - Explain why: When core muscles are not braced and knees are locked straight, overhead arm motion can cause exaggerated weight-shift changes and affect your balance.

#### ***Braced Torso***

Participants will do the raised arm tug again, but this time they'll brace their abs for the tug.

- ⦿ Pull your abs in and up, shoulder blades back and down.
- ⦿ Keep your knees soft.
- ⦿ Lift one arm and pull it back.
  - Feel a difference this time? (Yes)
  - Did you rock backward a little less? (Yes)
  - Did a stabilized torso help you keep your balance? (Yes)

## ***Offset Feet***

Participants do the raised-arm tug again, but this time they add offset feet.

- ⦿ One foot is forward, one back. Feet are shoulder-width apart.
- ⦿ Keep your knees soft.
- ⦿ Pull your abs in and up, shoulder blades back and down.
- ⦿ Lift the arm again.
  - Reach up and forward with it.
  - Then and tug it firmly back.
  - Feel any differences when the feet are offset?
- ⦿ An explanation: Offset feet gives us more room in which to rock or move forward and back safely. This is because our center of gravity (our belly button) is staying between a wider base of support (offset feet). When our feet were side by side our safe rocking space was only the length of our feet. We effectively lengthened our base of support in the direction of our reach with offset feet.

## ***Hat Box to Chest***

Now they are ready to reach for those hat boxes with braced abs and offset feet. Tell them that this time there will be one more change. Once they reach their hat box, instead of pulling it back overhead they should lower it to their chest. This way there is less momentum to pull them backward and more that directs the pull toward their center of gravity.



- ⦿ With braced torso, soft knees, and offset feet, reach up for the hat box.
- ⦿ Can you feel yourself rock forward onto the forward foot?
- ⦿ Grab the box using your Venus de Milo Arms, if necessary. (Does Go Go Gadget come to mind?).
- ⦿ Keeping your abs braced, pull the box down toward your chest (not overhead).
- ⦿ Did you feel yourself rock to the back foot as you came down? Perfect!
- ⦿ Can you notice the extra distance you can safely rock forward and backward when your feet are offset?

### **Give It More Balance »**

- ⦿ For comparison's sake, have participants rock with the feet side by side (there's more balance risk here, so be careful).
- ⦿ Rock again with offset feet.
- ⦿ Ask participants if they feel the difference in the range of motion (offset feet create a wider base of support).

### **Keep It Safe »**

- ⦿ Place walkers or chairs in front of participants for extra backup.
- ⦿ Let them decide how far they want to reach upwards. This is where having imaginary shelves is handy.

### **Live It »**

Torso stability, foot position, and arm movements all affect balance stability during everyday tasks such as reaching.